

Global Alliance Against Industrial Aquaculture, 18 January 2016

Save Scottish Salmon: Stop Norwegian Salmon Farms Killing Wild Fish!

- Millions of 'Viking' salmon on the lam in Scotland

Wester Ross, Scotland - The iconic Atlantic salmon is facing imminent extinction on the West coast of Scotland due to the lethal impacts of escapes, diseases and parasites from salmon farms. Salmon farming is quite literally killing wild fish - that's the stark message from yesterday's [Mail On Sunday](#) newspaper [1].



Earlier today Salmon & Trout Conservation Scotland [launched](#) a parliamentary petition - "[Protecting wild salmonids from sea lice from Scottish salmon farms](#)" - calling for statutory tighter regulation of salmon farms to protect wild salmon and sea trout.

Tony Andrews, Chief Executive of the Atlantic Salmon Trust, told [The Mail on Sunday](#): "All rivers in the West Coast bio-range are under severe stress from the impact of salmon farming, Some are threatened with the extinction of both wild salmon and sea trout. Some already appear to have reached that stage. For every wild salmon in Scotland, there are at least 200 farmed salmon in cages sharing the same space. It's simply not sustainable."

Award-winning angling author [Bruce Sandison](#) wrote in [The Mail on Sunday](#): "Nothing has been done, and nothing is proposed to be done to halt the catastrophic collapse of wild salmon and sea-trout in the west highlands and Scotland; where many informed observers believe that disease and pollution from primarily Norwegian-owned factory fish farms has brought distinct populations of wild salmon and sea-trout in many rivers, such as the River Balgy, to the verge of extinction. The source of the Balgy is in Loch Damph. There are salmon rearing cages in the loch, and, also, a number of factory salmon farms in sea Loch

Torridon, into which the Balgy drains; parasitic sea lice breed on salmon and, essentially, eat them alive, also attack wild fish as they pass by the farm salmon cages. I am convinced that they are primarily responsible for destroying Scotland's west coast highlands and islands wild salmon and sea-trout."

Don Staniford, Director of the [Global Alliance Against Industrial Aquaculture](#), told [The Mail on Sunday](#): "More than 3.5 million farmed salmon have escaped in Scotland since 1998. Previous sampling on the Balgy nine years ago showed the vast majority of its salmon were of farmed Norwegian origin. Today we believe it probably has no wild salmon. Instead, it's jam-packed with farmed fish - and there are many others like it."

Read more via:

["River of Death: In a corner of Scotland wild salmon are now extinct. Is it just the start of a nationwide natural catastrophe?"](#) (The Mail on Sunday, 17 January 2016)

["Save Our Salmon: Government must act now....or this country risks casting away one of the true wonders of our natural world"](#) (The Mail on Sunday, 17 January 2016)

An [analysis in 2014 by GAAIA](#) of official statistics [published online by the Scottish Government](#) revealed that since 1998 (when statistics became publicly available), there have been over 3.4 million escapees in nearly 200 separate incidents. In January 2014, 154,569 farmed salmon [escaped from a salmon farm in Shetland](#). In June 2015, 16,000 farmed salmon [escaped from a Marine Harvest farm in Argyll](#).

On average since 1998, there have been 11 escape incidents and 201,000 escapees per year. A comparison with [farmed salmon production data](#) published annually by the Scottish Government revealed that there has been one escapee per 0.7 tonnes of farmed salmon production since 1998 - with 2011, 2005 and 2000 the worst years for escapes. A comparison with [wild salmon catch statistics](#) revealed that farmed salmon escapees are twice the number of wild salmon caught.

For more background please read "[Scottish Salmon's Great Escape](#)"

Salmon & Trout Conservation Scotland [launched a parliamentary petition](#) earlier today calling for tighter regulation of salmon farms to protect wild fish - read the petition via [PE01598: Protecting wild salmonids from sea lice from Scottish salmon farms](#)

Paul Knight, CEO of the Salmon & Trout Conservation UK and Co-Chair of the NGOs at the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organisation (NASCO), said in a [press release](#): "The current regulatory regime for fish farms in Scotland gives very little protection to wild salmon and sea trout and is untenable. If Scottish Government is to live up to its international obligations to protect wild fish, it must now bolster the regulatory control of salmon farming to limit any potential damage. Measures must include provision for proper sanctions against farms that transgress – including early culling or harvest. It is inexcusable that Scotland lags so far behind Norway in this respect."

**Contact:**

Don Staniford: 07771 541826 ([dstaniford@gaaia.org](mailto:dstaniford@gaaia.org))

[1]



**DANGER:** The wild salmon, pictured, is at risk from farmed fish

By Mike Merritt and Kirsten Johnson

FOR anglers hoping to land a wild salmon, it has long been a celebrated sporting river.

But the Balgy has gained a new, entirely unwelcome distinction as the first river in the country to run out of Scotland's most iconic fish.

Experts believe its population of wild salmon has been wiped out.

The fast-flowing stretch of water running from Loch Damph to Loch Torridon in Wester Ross once boasted an annual catch of more than 50 wild salmon – Scotland's native *salmo salar*.

Now conservationists say none is left. The non-native Norwegian *salmo domesticus* has taken over after escaping from fish farms.

Wild Atlantic salmon are lean,

**'The big suspect is fish farming'**

muscular and naturally pink from their crustacean diet.

Farmed salmon, which are fed dry pellets and kept in small cages, have a higher fat content and are injected with colouring to create an artificially pink flesh.

Last night, experts at the Atlantic Salmon Trust (AST) warned the Balgy's fate could be replicated across the country unless swift action is taken.

Angling is worth more than £130 million annually to Scottish economy, supporting 2,800 jobs.

But in 2014, the total Scottish rod catch was the worst since consistent records began in 1952 – and early indications are that the 2015



**CONCERNED:** Prince Charles, patron of the AST

# RIVER OF DEATH

In a corner of Scotland wild salmon are now extinct. Is it just the start of nationwide natural catastrophe?

figure will show a further drop.

The trust has commissioned an urgent scientific study of aquaculture's impact on wild salmon.

Millions of salmon farm escapees have swamped West Coast rivers in recent years, breeding with indigenous stocks.

An influx of sea-lice

from the intensive farms is also blamed for killing wild salmon.

AST chief executive Tony Andrews said: 'All rivers in the West Coast bio-range are under severe stress from the impact of salmon farming. Some are threatened with the extinction of both wild salmon and sea trout. Some already appear to have reached that stage.'

'We have been worried about rivers like the Balgy for a few years. It has salmon but we think few, if any, are wild salmon. We want to avoid these situations being repeated.'

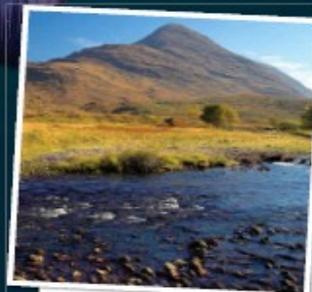
'Salmon are resilient but if we go

on killing them with man-made intrusions, they won't survive.

The AST recently raised the issue with its patron, Prince Charles. Mr Andrews said: 'He is concerned the wild species is in decline and supports the trust's approach for evidence and science to back it up.'

'That is why we are talking to scientists about a new study. The big suspect is fish farming but we need scientific evidence to support it.'

'AST has been at the forefront of



**WIPED OUT:** Experts believe the River Balgy has lost its wild salmon

encouraging the fish farming industry to develop sustainable production by adopting new technologies and practices. Action is overdue.

'For every wild salmon in Scotland, there are at least 200 farmed salmon in cages sharing the same space. It's simply not sustainable.'

The Global Alliance Against Industrial Aquaculture said more than 3.5 million farmed salmon have escaped in Scotland since 1998.

Director Don Staniford said: 'Previous sampling on the Balgy nine years ago showed the vast majority of its salmon were of farmed Norwegian origin. Today we believe it probably has no wild salmon. Instead, it's jam-packed with farmed fish – and there are many others like it.'

**GOVERNMENT MUST ACT TO SAVE OUR SALMON: PAGE 25**

Read article [online here](#) and via "[River of Death: In a corner of Scotland wild salmon are now extinct. Is it just the start of a nationwide natural catastrophe?](#)" (The Mail on Sunday, 17 January 2016)

Government **MUST** act  
now... or this country risks  
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**S**ave  
**O**ur  
**S**almon

**GOVERNMENT MUST ACT TO SAVE OUR SALMON:**

*By Bruce Sandison  
The Scottish Mail on Sunday  
Jan 17 2016*

# GOVERNMENT MUST ACT TO SAVE OUR SALMON:

Government MUST act now... or this country risks casting away one of the true wonders of our natural world

The Scottish Mail on Sunday 17 Jan 2016 By  
Bruce Sandison

I WAS fishing for trout in Cow Ford Pool on the River Tweed, upstream from Innerleithen. The water there sweeps down from the crossing, then swirls through a narrow neck into a deep pot. My flies, swinging in the current,

scribe to someone unafflicted by the incurable disease of angling the feeling of desolation that follows such an event. It was my first time and I still remember every moment; the salmon in the pool with my tiny Silver Butcher fly in the corner of its mouth. I still feel the strength of the fish and still see its splendid leap as it powered upstream.

My elder brother Ian came to fetch me for supper. 'Why are you crying, Bruce?' he asked. 'Ian, I have just lost a salmon.' 'Oh, is that all, come on, time to go,' he replied.

SINCE the end of the last Ice Age, more than 8,000 years ago, salmon and sea trout have been in Scotland's rivers and lochs. The Picts revered salmon as a sign of wisdom and carved images of the

stopped suddenly. As a 15-year-old, flies were expensive and precious. Wading into the pool I raised my rod sharply, hoping to loosen the fly. I appeared to be dragging the obstruction towards me and I peered into the flow, expecting to see the branch of a tree.

The obstruction came closer. I looked again. It was not a branch but a magnificent salmon, its tail swishing gently to hold its position. I froze in terror and excitement. The salmon seemed as entirely unaware of its predicament as I was acutely aware of mine. How

fish on their symbol stones. When Queen Victoria 'popularised' the Highlands, anglers followed. Many chose to fish the major salmon rivers, on the East Coast: Tweed, Tay, Dee and Spey.

Others sought the silence of our magnificent North and West Coast streams: Thurso, Naver, Dionard, Laxford, Inver, Lochy and Awe. Thousands of wild salmon and sea trout thrived in these waters, attracting anglers from all over the world.

Accurate records of salmon and sea trout caught in Scotland have been kept since 1952. In the early 1960s, it began to emerge that a general decline in the number caught was taking place. Several reasons were put forward to explain this including indiscriminate netting of

could I land the fish? It was too big for my net. Could I lead it to the bank, then grab its tail and push the fish ashore?

Moving towards the bank was the only option. The cast to which my flies were attached had a breaking strain of 3lb 8oz; the salmon looked about the size of a small battleship. I stepped backwards again. The salmon followed. Another step. The salmon shook its head. I reeled more line onto my reel. That aroused the salmon to fury. It headed upstream in a surge so powerful it almost pulled the trout rod from my hand. Just before the neck of the pool, it threw itself clear, a shining scimitar surrounded by crystals of flying spray.

AS the salmon surged back into the river, my cast broke. It is hard to de-

salmon and sea trout in coastal waters; netting at sea on the migratory routes of salmon travelling to and from their feeding grounds off Iceland and Greenland; industrial fishing for base of the food chain species such as sandeels, capelin and Norwegian pout, a principal food source for many species of marine animals and seabirds; and global warming. Since then, an enormous amount of research, and money, has been expended on trying to address this situation – and it appears to be having an effect.

The decline may not have been stopped, but at least there are encouraging signs that progress is being made. This is largely due to Icelander Orri Vigfusson and his North Atlantic Salmon Fund, which has negotiated the buy-out

of major salmon netting interests, including the infamous North East of England Drift Net Fishery and the drift net fishery off the West Coast of Ireland, which, combined, could take upwards of 250,000 wild fish each year.

In Scotland, an enlightened approach to rod and line fishery management and habitat restoration has had a positive impact: rod and line anglers now voluntarily return more than 90 per cent of all wild salmon caught between January and June and 80 per cent thereafter. Some 30,000 wild salmon and sea trout are still taken by coastal nets. But in the interests of salmon conservation, the Scottish Government has, as of April 2016, a proposal to ban this activity.

BUT nothing has been done, and nothing is proposed, to halt the catastrophic collapse of wild salmon and sea trout in the West Highlands and Islands of Scotland, where many informed observers believe that disease and pollution from primarily Norwegian-owned factory fish farms has brought distinct populations of wild salmon and sea trout in many rivers, such as the Balgy, to the verge of extinction.

The source of the Balgy is in Loch Damph. There are salmon rearing cages in the loch and a number of factory salmon farms in Loch Torridon, into which the Balgy drains. Sea lice, which breed on salmon and, essentially, eat them alive, also attack wild fish as they pass farm salmon cages. I am convinced

they are primarily responsible for destroying Scotland's West Coast wild salmon and sea trout.

This can only be resolved by the Scottish Government. Firstly, it should help get polluting salmon farms out of the sea and into land-based, closed containment systems. Secondly, it should ban industrial fishing for base of the food chain species. I know there are other factors, but these two projects would immediately save thousands of wild salmon and sea trout.

It would also give future generations of small boys a chance to find the treasure I found on the Tweed so many years ago.

Secret Lochs and Special Places: An Angling Memoir, Bruce Sandison, Black

& White, £14.99.

Nothing has been done to halt catastrophic collapse

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